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REFLECTIONS

Volume 20

1988

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LITERARY CONTEST

Each year the English Department of Gardner-Webb College sponsors a literary contest for all student submissions chosen for publication in *Reflections*. Faculty and nonstudent submissions are not eligible for the contest. All works are judged anonymously by the final contest judges. This year's judges were Dr. A. Frank Bonner, Dr. Dennis Quinn, and Dr. William B. Stowe.

AWARDS

First Place:	The Possum	Melissa Brown
Second Place:	His Secret	Bobby Beale
Third Place:	How to Guard a Heart	Jimmy Byrd

HONORABLE MENTION

On Absence of Form	Amanda Thomas
With Virginia By The Sea	Amanda Thomas
Plastic Yuppie	Deborah Cravey
Before The Wind	Deborah Cravey
A Dead Fireplace	Melissa Brown

ART CONTEST

This year the Art Department of Gardner-Webb College has sponsored an art contest for all student submissions chosen for publication in *Reflections*. Faculty and nonstudent submissions are not eligible for the contest. All works are judged anonymously by the final contest judges. This year's judges were Miriam Ash-Jones, Barbara Cribb, and Charlotte Slice.

AWARDS

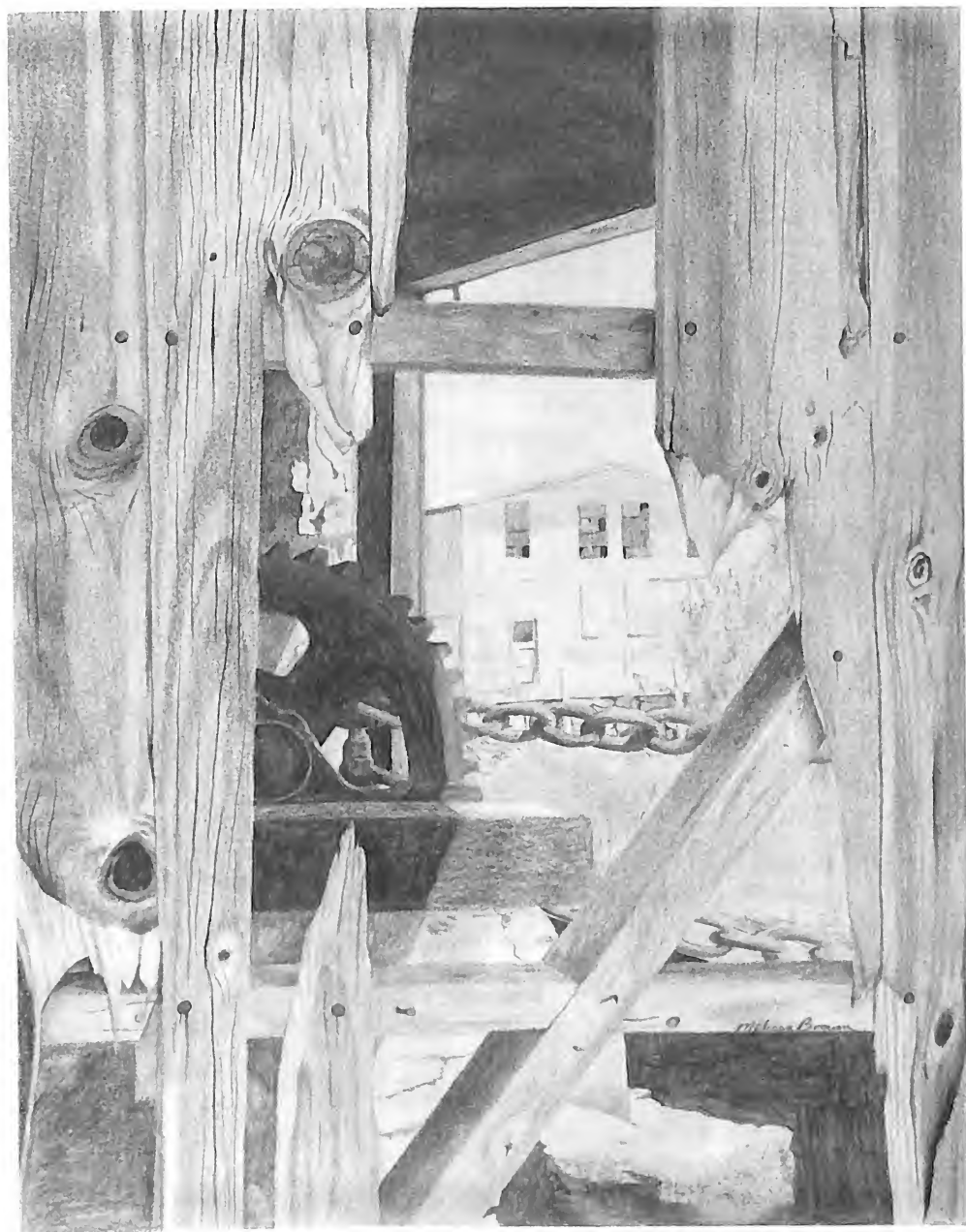
First Place:	Rustic	Melissa Brown
Second Place:	Angel Abstract	Henry Doo
Third Place:	Study in Shadow	Craig Lewis

HONORABLE MENTION

Grandfather and Child	Paula Spangler
Laura At The Piano	Jeff Thomasson
Resting	Melissa Brown
Evening	Melissa Brown

"RUSTIC"

Melissa Brown



WORDS

Words

left unsaid

unread

unwritten

they linger

and burn our souls

poured forth from mouth

or pen

they cut

slash

heal

soothe

and restore

filling the emptiness of ourselves.

Words

born of our emotions

gifting them with wings

Bobby Beale

CRAFTSMANSHIP

With an eight-point saw,
a strong arm, plenty of energy,
And a little time,
Standard lumber--maddeningly uniform, graded,
moisture-content labelled--
Becomes Beauty, Art, a marvel.

It's Easy.

Shaping the Word is harder.
Strength doesn't help--unless it's of the spirit--
And even then it provides
only endurance
maybe a little insight,
rarely depth.

The material itself is unwieldy,

Bulky,

Resistive to control.

It promises much more

Than it can deliver.

But, the poet must carve away at the timber,

Shape and reshape the support beams,

Crawl around in the scrap heap

for the right piece.

And, when the battered thing emerges,

It too is often Beauty----

But the price is too high.

William B. Stowe

A dead fireplace
Holds an old, black iron kettle
Stuck stiffly to its hook.
Soot creeps out onto a wooden floor
Like a parasite, a disease of the dilapidated house.
A wrinkled man
Stares expressionless out of a broken window
At children playing on the lawn.
He is saddened;
Some day the children will live here.

Melissa Brown

It is among my fears
To drown in this struggle .
I battle waves and tears
That pull me under and back around,
And with violent turmoil
I slowly realize I'm sinking down.
From where comes this current that tugs me,
And why is it
That only this troubled water hugs me.

Melissa Brown

With Virginia By The Sea

... to Elizabeth Jay

I sat down in my wicker chair by the seaside
And Virginia spun her glowing tale for me.
She rattled on as if she'd never take a breath,
Re-creating the adventures she'd seen at the seashore years
before.

So vivid her descriptions
I could not help but believe those characters to be
those she knew best;
so well she knew their moods and wants, dreams and pasts,
Her comprehension beyond imagination.
And she painted joyous, tremulous scenes on the canvas
of my mind,
Her portraits lightly tripping from her lips and into
my imagination
As they all stood before me: mother, father, children,
lovers, artist, writer,
In one big splendid house
By the seashore.

I leaned back in my wicker chair and closed my eyes
As these shadows leapt to life and danced in her eyes
and my mind.
They flitted through the hedgerows and broad yards of
my sunswept imagination,
And played Blindman's Bluff with my own thoughts.
And when she closed that part of her tale,
I rolled up my thoughts, picked up my book, and ran to
the house by the seashore,
Only stopping long enough to shake the sand from my feet
And give one more quick glance
To the lighthouse.

Going Nowhere Together

Ooh, that hurt.
But it was your turn
So I'll take the pain
Like a man--
Immaturely.

The unknown--
Being alone--
is scary
So we hang on
Because at least the pain
is familiar.

You are an old shoe
Too comfortable, too safe
To be kept
Even after the "soul" is worn away.

I could kill you
Easier than I could hate you, though.
Kill you with my love--
I wish I could--
Satisfy both desires--
(Love you to death HA HA)

I want to be like you--
Dumb in your wisdom--
Going nowhere at lightening speed...
Bet I'll beat you there!

We refuse to think of life
Apart--
And perhaps that is what is
Hurting us most of all...

"EVENING"

Melissa Brown



The Win He Lost

He stepped out of the darkness and into the eerie dimness of the smoke-filled room. After a long stare at the ceiling fan and its single light, he eased into the cold steel chair. He wasn't alone: nor was he in the company of friends. He knew, however, what he had to do, and he set his mind to do it.

His name was Jake, just Jake. I met him in a bar in Frisco ten years ago. I was playing stud with some buddies and he asked to sit in. Eager for fresh blood, I let him in. That was a mistake. From the minute he sat down, I did nothing but lose. A total of \$7000! Funny thing 'bout Jake, though. He only said one thing the whole night, "Call," he said. That's the only thing he ever said. I've never seen a card player like Jake; he never loses-NEVER...

The dealer was a skeletal figure clad in sable and sat across from Jake, looking him over. I stood propped up against the wall: silent.

"Are you in?" the dealer hissed.

Jake nodded his head.

"Five card stud, Jacks are better."

The cards slid from the frigid hands of the dealer and into the silence of Jake's corner.

"King 'a spades showin'. Possible five of a kind. Dealer shows five 'a hearts. Your bet, king."

Jake frivolously tossed a thousand bucks into the ante.

"This isn't just a game," I thought, "This is for real."

The dealer, however, thought nothing of Jake's wager. He matched and passed the third card.

"King, Jack 'a spades holdin'. Possible five of a kind. Dealer shows five 'a hearts, six 'a hearts. Possible straight flush. King still high; make your bet."

Jake peeked at his down card. With little hesitation, he threw two grand into the mounting pile. Jake had something, I knew it.

An evil grin came upon the visage of the dealer. He covered Jake's money with a cackling laugh.

The fourth card went to Jake.

"King, Jack, three 'a spades up. Still possible four of a kind. Dealer shows pair 'a 5s and a 6. Pair 'a kings still dominant."

Instantly, Jake plopped five big ones into the kitty. The dealer met his offer with, surprisingly, greater confidence.

The fifth and final card was dealt.

"King, Jack, three, King 'a hearts. Veeery possible four of a kind. I show pair 'a fives, pair'a sixes. Veeery possible full house. Kings still control."

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS!

"Call," Jake said as only he could.

The dealer flipped his down card up.

"Full house. Sixes high."

Silence. Eternity had come. Judgement day was here.

What was the verdict?

Moments passed, and finally, Jake deliberately flipped his down card with the confidence of victory at hand.

"I win."

There was a sudden bang and Jake crashed to the floor!

The dealer rose from the table reaching for his ebony cloak as he slowly made his way to the door. As he reached the exit, he turned and whispered,

"There is only one game and I shall always win."

He then mounted his pale horse and disappeared into dusk.

"RESTING"

Melissa Brown



A Short Journey Home

The streets of London, dreary and grey,
To me foreign soil and menacing sky
Shallow, superficial, no time of day,
But there in the distance a light that cannot hide.

Alien to this dark land but so beautiful to me
Amid black nothingness dead senses come to life,
Only a promotional ad to travel for some--but it's home I see
The happiness that comes only in the mind.

Rolling hills of green and skies of blue
The thick white clouds dance as time stands still,
Sounds of spring coming to life, nature starts anew,
It's the ultimate beauty carved by a master of art and skill.

A family picnic in the month of May
Laughing and playing with those I had known,
A sensational thought on such a dreary day
As my mind drifts from this place for which I long.

To the muffled sound of twelve tones I awake,
No need to mark time when one is alone,
As a heavy mist falls on the streets like a plague,
I walk into nothingness but with the warmth of
a short journey home.

Burt Wilson

Delgato's Bakery

Her eyes, those wet, frosty window panes
That witness to walking, fading passersby
And fog-up with fresh-baked bagel steam
Are illuminated in a warm, neon vision
She is old
And withered
And charming.
How she beckons people in the road
With a tantalizing exhalation
-the aroma of bread,
Flaming with yeast-born sea-foam freshness
Inside her toasty belly, a cluster of women,
Clutching their early morning handbags,
Pause and point at day-old pastry
While wrestling with the idea of poppy seeds
And stealing cynical glances
At plaster wedding cakes
Then, in one eye-level splash of color,
A sleepy child spies an untamed clan of jellybeans
-entombed by an unforgiving mason jar
Oh, those plastic, painted buttons, huddled tightly-
They press their noses to the glass
And tease the senses in a swirl of eye-crossed, sugary plaid
Sweet house of daily substance, She's a shelter
From the morning rain
A beacon to the dingy street
And one by one, the people find the door
Then make their way to the littered curb
To the crumbled sidewalk,
And as they leave, she gives her little hanging bell
a tinkle

Deborah Cravey

How to Guard a Heart

The walls are important.
You must build them as thick and high as
You can without receiving help-
Your walls must be your own.

The color is optional.
Your favorite shade is the only shade
That will do-
Never use another's favorite color.

The door is essential.
Small, sturdy, doors with rusty hinges
Seldom disappoint souls-
Keep the key within.

The furniture is discretionary.
You may choose big, soft, sofas or
Petite, hard, chairs. Choose wisely-
Your comfort is your god.

The library is inevitable.
Choose your reading safely! Avoid Homer and Spenser
In favor of Stephen King and Irving Wallace-
Flee Milton at all costs!

The trophy case is full.
Be proud and rejoice! Your tidy room
Blends ultimate security with an arctic feel-
Don't check your pulse.

"STUDY IN SHADOW"

Craig Lewis



Confessions: Dark Side of a Gemini

You had majestic dreams and I shared in them.
Now I have betrayed you, in that I doubt those dreams have survived.
You see, the Realism I had feared is now upon me.
I expect to feel regret...
Unmercifully, the Newcomer prevents it.
Today, I may contemplate the meaning of life;
Tomorrow, I may live without the meaning of contemplation.
I detest this fanaticism,
Yet equally fear the boredom of detachment.
You, however, my Soulmate of the past, further disturb my waters.
In you also I see the dark and the light, the calm and the storm.
I see an illustration of my own nature, or a part of it.
I have not betrayed you,
For my promise to you was to truly live and I have.
Your dreams do not depend on me, they inspire me.

Michelle O'Brien

Blocked

The sky is blue

The football game starts well for your team - the Suns.
Without effort, they move down the field
for a quick touchdown against the visiting team -
the Hurricanes.

The visitors recover quickly and tie the score at seven.

A turnover by the Suns

results in the Hurricanes adding seven more.

Suddenly, the Suns become tight;
their execution is without grace.

The Hurricanes are in control, blocking the path to victory.

The earth becomes cool.

The sky is blotched with grey.

At halftime, the Suns trail by seventeen.

Their locker room is silent; the atmosphere is ruled
by the image of the Hurricanes.

The shadows grow longer.

Soon the sun will set.

The third-quarter begins and the shaky Suns
force the Hurricanes to punt.

Out of sheer desperation,

the Suns drive downfield with unexpected strength.

The ball rests four yards from the goal line.

Your heart is reinforced with the hope of a heroic comeback.

Weak rays of light lazily dodge the wind
to bathe the ground.

On first down,

the Suns try a straightforward rush up the middle
and are stopped for no gain.

On second-down,

the Suns attempt to run around the clogged-up pile;
the runner is forced out of bounds.

On third-down,

the Suns call a pass play;
but the ball falls incomplete.

It is fourth-down.

Onto the field trots the field-goal unit.
The snap is good and the hold is true;
the kick is blocked.
The Hurricanes celebrate;
their bellows echo deep inside your soul.
They dominate the rest of the game.

The clouds solidify.
Thunder shakes the ground.
Rain falls steadily.

Later, the frustration and hopelessness fades.
You know you'll play the Hurricanes again.

The storm will pass,
and the earth will bear fruit in the clean light.

Todd Watson

Poor Little Princess

Poor little princess,
Always falls for kings or princes.
When will you ever learn?
After a hundred princes ride off
 into the sunset-
 without you?
After a thousand kings kiss you
farewell-
And never look back?
Poor little princess,
Always falls for kings or princes,
but never sees the jester
who laughs and cries for you.
Poor little princess.

Carol Ann Smith

His Secret

Among the dunes he lived alone,
an old man feeding crabs.
His only friend was solitude.
His books were all he had.
A bum, some people called him,
"Why don'tcha learn a trade?"
"There must be something he can do,"
thus they denied him aid.
"I would nae take it from them,"
said the old man once to me.
"You live your life, you pay your debts
'for nothin', lad, comes free!"
He puzzled me, this old gray man
who lived beside the sea.
He seemed to have nothing to do
but sit and talk to me.
"Dad says 'ya bum'," I says to him -
He stared across his cup.
"Why din'tcha ever go to work
when fin'lly you grow'd up?"
A twinkle lit his greenish eyes!
He put his coffee down
and cocked his hat upon his head,
like when he went to town.
"Now there's a touchy question, lad,"
he finally replied.
"You're not the first to ask it
and before I always lied
but you're a friend, uncommon true,
and friends are rare indeed.
You'll find your answer on this page
if e'er you learn to read."
I took the paper offered me
and, speechless, walked away.
I hoped that he would stop me
but he didn't, not that day.

The years go by; life goes on;
oh yes, I learned to read.
The answer that he gave me has
been planted, like a seed

down deep, within me, but I'll share with you
his secret, if you be so bold -
It's this, "I've never felt grown-up,
though sometimes I've felt old."

Bobby Beale

Trapped

What I got from my father was no more than what
I received from my mother!
Different traits and sometimes the same traits
reinforced.
They gave all of themselves to me and a sister
but no brother.
Their strengths and weaknesses were handed down:
From head to toe and all between;
A frail body with limitations imposed,
A hairline fast receding and turning grey,
And a certain texture of the nose exposed.
The hair and beard on head and face
With comb or razor is difficult to separate.
Except as nature takes its toll
Beginning at the top,
From there it's all down hill
As gravity pulls the tissue and all that's loose and flexible
Toward the thick toenails turning yellow and corroding.
And this is just the covering
For something much more fragile underneath
But, confidentially, a part of me is pretty durable.
That's how it is as I sit with chin in hand and the
elbow propped.
Imprisoned by walls of dark colors and my own skin
In the midst of a daze of labyrinthian confusion,
I am separated from constructively exhilarating activities
And am only occasionally invited out by the imagination.

Ernest Blankenship

Class

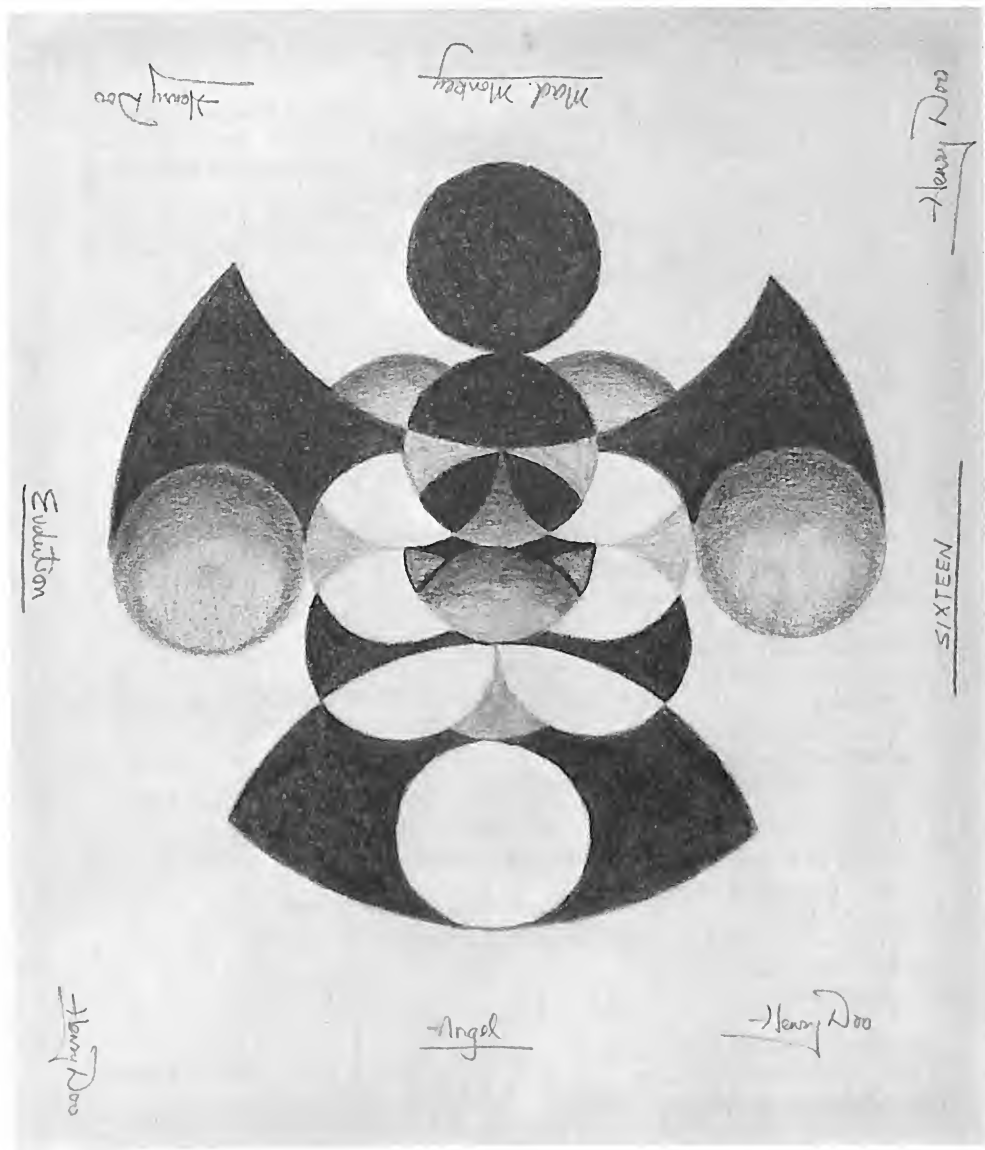
"COLORLESS GREEN IDEAS SLEEP FURIOUSLY."

he stood by a chair and spoke.
i heard dormice laughing
and colors floating in crevices of my brain.
i floated up, up to the ceiling
and twirled in non-knowingness
drinking in every movement
and felt the time warp
squeeze my brain
and thought: "IT'S NEVER BEEN
LIKE THIS BEFORE."
structure evaded me
slipping by lithely between hedgerows
of syntax
but i almost didn't care
sitting with my brain spinning
into dizzying spirals of somnambulism
and listening to excited drone
of generations of hatters and hunters
on quests of new worlds
and i had to smile as
my colorless green ideas slept furiously.

Amanda Thomas

"ANGEL ABSTRACT"

Henry Doo



In Absence of Form

Four songs for the night season

I

The room closes in on me in
Dizzying recompense
As I sit,
And the wonder
Of your absence
echoes from these walls.
Reading Eliot and
Dreaming
Of a darker day
In which form meets content
And the whole rejoices;
I cannot think what it is now
But suffer the
Silence
To chide my unforgiving
Diffidence to elusive structures.

II

As an American dream
Crushes intention of order,
The music fades within
My brain
Fighting to rediscover wonder
Of early hope and promise

Voices transfer in memory
And faces crowd in watchful
Curiosity
At a mind grown stiff
In winter desolate,
As dry as Ishmael's sun-bleached bones.

III

Tenant of a borrowed room
Stares perplexed at
Sterile culture
Drunk with indifference shrouded in cold steel
Confusion lacks clarity of
Bygone eras

Tenant of a borrowed room
Reads borrowed books in
Soul shattering silence,

And tiles of marble rise to meet the sky,
Darkened in anticipation of symmetry.
She pauses in the white-shined corridor
As if to say "Enough"
But continues in regular rhythm
Of heartbeat
As just-shined shoes lie by her door.
Thought reserved for warm-wet season
Of cerebral rain.

IV

Dots of rain pock a face
Heaven-bound and tied to earthen vessel.
Profundity put at nought,
Readings continue in useless discipline
As Keats dies of loneliness
In a darkened phase of the moon

Amanda Thomas

Numb

The MTV blares the static nonsense of hollow words
set to noise. It screams the words of
love and forever
and
dreams and truth.

Video games belch the programmed sounds of audio
deaths that sound nothing like
reality.

A violent smack sends a small white ball crashing
into others that reel in every direction
in mock hysteria and chaos.

I sit in the very center of it all. I am surrounded
by millions of events; yet, I feel nothing.
I am
numb.

Carol Ann Smith

The Possum

On an angry autumn evening
When the round-toothed horizon
Was swallowing the last of the blush light
And the wailing, wind-whipped trees
Turned up their palms
For the cleansing soon to come,
A branchless oak still gripped the soil
With the stiffness of a corpse's clench.
But a gust that scattered leaves like caribou
Snapped the top off the tree,
And sent it bounding to a creek.
The remnant stood like a tall smoke stack.
Then from the flue at the distant top
A white possum slowly poked its head and looked around,
And in confusion's buzz,
Let the wind just lick his whiskers back.

Melissa Brown

Plastic Yuppie

An air-conditioned smile completes your sanded, wooden face
How stop-sign straight you stand-

The look of finance in your eye
You've certainly caught a kite to the blazing, fluorescent sky-lights
And become the duchess of direct design
Without a hint of perspiration

From your head flows a luscious, synthetic straw-gold river
That whets the very heart of every witness to its course
And how well it knows its place!

For one who has never known a mirror,
You reflect that perfect essence...
Of Goddess, of Grandeur, of Gucci
As you beckon without motion,
Tickle without touch

Cheekbones that sing with taunting immortality
And a stomach, taut and tidy,
That shall never snap a seam
Oh, what is it you envision as you look far beyond your viewer?
Is it some land of timeless fashions,
Or the sign marked "exit", lit with green?

How you gracefully lead the sordid race for acid-burning, trendy taste-
Sporting fast food designerwear, fit for any just occasion
But yours is not a world of glamour
Not at all the 24 karat reef of dreams

Your stern expression has always led the living to believe...
Yes, the hands of servants dress you,
But your molded tongue excretes not a word when they cover your corpse
And their opinions must become your own

You've the body of athletic quintessence-
Until they place a wooden tennis racket in your palm that never sweats
Then there's a spark of mingled, splintered flesh

And my, you look so sporty!
But you will never know an overhead smash
Or Democrats, or Vietnam, or vanilla ice cream, or religion
So step down from your rhinestone-studded, dollar days mirage,
O, Matron of Macy's; JC Penney Jester...

And remember, the next time you feel the urge to stare conde-
scendingly through the back of some poor shopper's head,
That even Vanna gets to move.

Deborah Cravey

The Little Girl

Her blond hair sparkles in the sun
as she plays in the yard.
She is alone,
playing house,
acting out the parts
of an entire family:
Mother cooking dinner
Father mowing grass
Brother and Sister playing games.

She enacts family life in complete detail,
almost realistic.

The trees and shrubs
are her audience

The grass,
her stage.

She senses a presence
Her mother is watching.

She turns,
sees her mother,
A sheepish grin covers her face.
Her mother laughs
and returns to her work.

The little girl
returns to her 'stage'.
Another performance begins.

David Hall

Wild Cat Parties

(dedicated to Squeaky and Licorice)

Meowing and purring at the moon,
Pawing and hissing from night till noon,
Empty beer cans all over the floor,
Wild Cat Parties; but there's more...

Stereos blasting their favorite songs,
Laughing and dancing as they light up their bongos,
Dead mice for snacks all in a row,
Wild Cat Parties; yes, I know...

The food is cooked in the oven with heat,
By now all the cats are ready to eat,
Biting and scratching to get to the mice,
Wild Cat Parties; they're not very nice...

They live it up till the sun has gone down,
Munching and crunching and out on the town.
But all too soon will it come to an end,
Wild Cat Parties; not to attend...

Night is here, the cats are done,
the records are warped and so is the fun.
The house is a mess, but what do they care,
Wild Cat Parties; if you dare...

The party is over, the house is still,
but to look inside would make you ill.
The bash is over till another day,
Wild Cat Parties; they're O.K.!

Sue Cottrell

Before the Wind

A Sunday morning sky is sweet seduced by black lace paper clouds...

How this field of snake pit sandspurs pulls the brewing, hungry
breath of storm

and growls a stifled, beastly warning to the dimness of
the air

See the violent rising heads of armor-clad rigid weeds as they
ferociously stand guard

Between themselves, they murmur hissing threats of the
awful damage they could do

If not rooted to the ground
-if they weren't clinging to the ground-

Their weather-bent, green leather stalks shake
in rattled, gusty convulsions

As the iron death-grip clasp of Mother Earth
allows no monster plant its freedom

In her hearty game of tug-o-war

Howling, scratching, pulling-

A drooling, teeth-bared plant is stretched and battered...

Leaving its passenger, silent thoughtful grasshopper
confused.

With the highest intensity of insect terror,

He closes one eye and tightens his hold on the swerving weed

His bug legs ache from straining as he rides his dandelion
steed

And waves fervently right-left-right

Forward, back, viciously forth again

Then, with a prayer, he swallows hard

And chokes on a high, lonely grasshopper scream

As he wonders what his life was like

Before the wind.

Deborah Cravey

Regret

Were I but younger several years--
Or had I been when I was younger
Less encumbered by my fears--
I would have rushed to tarry longer
In love for which there was no hunger,
In loss for which there were no tears.

Now die is cast and metal forged,
And not a thought was cast the die,
From whose fine, crafted mold had surged
That long ignored commodity,
From now whose gilded hollow I
Might recompense my demiurge.

Time's tapestry of justice screams
Contempt for unfound destiny.
Yet I, imprisoned in its seams,
Shall not relinquish quixotry,
For, though of time no longer free,
I grasp, and shall grasp, fleeting dreams.

Rudee Boan

At Uncle Morrison's Funeral

My cousin Henry sang
"Hark, Ten Thousand Harps and Voices"
in the way of our parents

Loud and strong and beautiful
with love and power

Calling forth from my childhood
Reunion memories,
 Fried chicken and chocolate pie,
 Cold Nu-Grape drinks in glass bottles
 chilled by hissing dry ice,
 Sweet tea and pesky yellow jackets
 on sweaty August Saturdays

Reverent cemetery strolls and pauses
before the strange-familiar names
of our family dead

Calling my mother's face to life again,
Proud of chocolate pies and family dignity,
Of reunion devotion,
Of children who would always know their place

And calling forth my childhood imaginings of my mother
as a little girl with dark, dark hair,
standing at a wood wall blackboard,
warming small cold hands by the cast-iron school stove
Pleased by spelling bee triumphs,
Gloating of victory over Ostwalt school,
Being a child who smiled free of pain

And calling forth understanding of a living past
which gives strength for the present,
which makes bearable the thought of the future

And I thank you cousin Henry
For singing so strong at your father's funeral

For now I know why
In an old frame school building with wasps soaring overhead,
Aunts and uncles and older cousins, hard and tired,
sweltering on stiff benches, waving funeral fans in harmony
Sang loud and strong and certain

"Oh, that will be joyful
To meet to part no more."

Joyce Brown

"GRANDFATHER & CHILD"

Paula Spangler



Purgatory

I go to bed at noon to get a little rest
And rise up restless in the middle of the night.
At rare moments sensations are felt
That fade away to be remembered
But never to be experienced again.
Soon the memory begins to fade.
But it casts a shadow on all experiences to follow,
And one always looks back to the Garden of Eden
While dreading to move into the future,
But the future hovers over and moves into where
The road and sky converge and make a compass for my path;
But at that point I seem no further up than where I was before.
Barefoot boys, broken glass, and red stains in the sand,
Rusty cans, worn out tools, and scraps from everywhere,
My hands are chapped and my feet are bleeding,,
But the man beside me has one leg and a stick.
I look and walk straight ahead, but the road becomes a circle.
People on it are going in two directions
But all profess to having the same destination.
Some walk in the sun; some walk in the shade;
But at night they all lie down exhausted-
Plucked, skinned, flayed, picked, accused, abused, betrayed, tricked.
The distance to Heaven and Hell is about the same,
And I have gone half way to both places.
Many have had it worse.
Pancreatic cancer strikes the young as well as old
The world is sick, but here I am.
Eternity is just as far back as it is ahead
And I'm in the middle of it.
Do I represent the fate of all?
Curtains are made of bamboo, iron, cotton, or prejudice.
The invisible ones and those of the past are the most damaging.
I made some use of and lost a lot of what the past had to offer.
With good reason I never felt at ease while I was coming through.
The year after I left they tore the school building down.
It almost fell while I was there.
Ever since, everything I invested time in seemed
to fall to pieces.
Since you are with me
Or will be coming a little after, beware.

Ernest Blankenship

The Cruel Victor

She asked about you--
I said you were gone.
She did not think that
I could hear the
Anxiousness behind her
Nonchalant facade.

She asked about me--
But I knew she did not
Really care
Her false concern was
A poor cover-up.

She asked about us--
I gave her no clue
Only a mysterious shrug
It did the trick better
Than any words could.

What a rotten actress--
She can not hide the resentment
She feels toward me--
But I, I am far worse.
I can not hide my smugness.

Robin Lindsay

— "MAN WITH BANJO" —

Susan Bell



Pride of the County

Why do I always draw these hick assignments? Why can't I investigate the alleged illegal toxic waste dumps or the improper use of government approved loans? Instead I have to travel hundreds of miles to work on some corny "Life in the Country" series that probably will never materialize anyway.

Seniority rules the newspaper business and I guess I'll just have to pay my dues to get the good stuff. But right now all this driving is making me delirious. I consider this a form of a test, checking my persistence and loyalty to the paper.

It's unbelievable how lonely and deserted this area of the country seems. It's as if all men died and nature has taken over. I wondered if there was any "life in the country" at all. I could drive for miles and not see any existence of a society, only sprinkled houses every ten miles or so.

As I rounded the next curve, I saw a small country store sitting on the ridge. This solitary structure was completely surrounded by freshly plowed earth, divided only by the thin, winding road which I travelled. The tiny building seemed a small sanctuary and refuge from the open vastness of the encompassing farm land.

As I moved closer, I could see two tractors sitting just to the side of the red bricked structure. One was an old, rusty Massey Ferguson. It was missing the left rear tire which was replaced with a cement block to keep it from tipping over. The other was a highly technical piece of machinery, a John Deere dressed in its familiar green. It looked new except for the left rear tire which was worn and dirty. It didn't match the other three tires and didn't appear to fit this particular machine.

When I reached the front of the country store I pulled up beside a singular fuel pump. It wasn't decorated with stickers that read Gulf, Exxon, or Amaco. It was just plain white, a generic fuel pump, perhaps.

The door to the squared building was propped open with an old butter churn, revealing a screened entrance. Just above the door was a white, tin sign that read "McIntyre's Grocery and Farm Implements" and on each side was a circular, red sign with Coca Cola spelled out in white.

I stepped out of my car, crossed the gravel lot, pulled open the screen door and stepped inside the dusty relic of a once modern building. I could see the proprietor sitting behind the counter, leaning back in a

straight chair against the wall. His feet were crossed and his head bowed. If he wasn't asleep already, then he was very close.

As the door slammed behind me, his head jerked as if he awoke from a dream. Noticing the comfort of his surroundings, he exhaled a deep breath.

Then he pulled himself up, steadied his balance and slowly slid his feet toward the cash register. He was a short man with skinny legs, and a round stomach that poured over his belt. The frame of his body was that of a small man, but his huge pot belly seemed to bend him over at the waist.

With graying hair and beard he appeared to be at least in his sixties maybe seventies. But his skin seemed like that of a newborn baby, not scarred or showing any signs of age. And his shiny blue eyes beneath his greying brow were like those of a young boy trapped in the body of an old, broken down man.

He seemed to beam with excitement at my presence, like a shipwrecked old man who just saw his savior in the form of an immaculate cruise ship. "Can I help you young man?" he pleaded in excitement.

"Need to ask some directions, if you've got the time," I answered.

"Don't never get too busy round here where we can't stop and give a stranger some help," he answered while looking me up and down. He seemed to be inspecting me like a fisherman eyes a prize catch.

"I'm looking for Mr. _."

"What kinda car you drivin' there?" the old man interrupted.

I thought this a strange question but answered "That's a Toyota Supra."

"Oh, must be a General Motors car, huh?"

"No, it's a Toyota. A foreign car."

He lost some of the gleam in his eyes, "Foreign, y'a say? Sure as hell looks foreign alright. Must be Italian. Myself, I only buy American."

Almost laughing I replied, "No, it's Japanese, but what I was wondering-?"

"Japanese! After the big war, and you're going to buy something from them. Why them Japs killed Tom McArver's brother's boy down there at Pearl Harbor. The whole county turned out for the funeral. Buried with full military honors, he was."

I nodded, "I just need to know how-."

"President Wilson sent his family a sympathy card. Cecil Merrit printed it in the *Daily Star*. Signed right there at the bottom, 'sincerely yours Woodrow Wilson.' Pride of the county for years."

"I just need directions - wait did you say Woodrow Wilson. Don't you mean President Roosevelt. Wilson was president during World War I, in World War II it was Roosevelt."

"I think you're right," he looked at me with disappointment. "It might have been Roosevelt. That Teddy was some great president."

I bit my tongue and headed for the door. Behind me I heard the old man say, "Wait, what was that you were going to ask me about?"

"That's alright. I'll find it myself."

He had all the answers. But they were the wrong answers. how could he survive in this age of computers, men in space, SALT talks, and nuclear warfare. But he seems to have a security here in his own world not experienced where I come from.

I climbed back into my suddenly all important sports car and resumed my cross-country endeavor. I sat thinking about the old man, when I spotted a basketball goal sitting in the middle of a field. The wooden backboard was nailed to an old crooked telephone pole. There was no cement or asphalt surface to dribble the basketball on. But the dirt ground was hard and flat and looked like a worn, brown carpet. There, next to the road was a sign that read "Frog Holler Flats-Home of Goose Wakefield."

I drove on about three or four miles until I reached a tiny white framed structure about the size of a permanent hot dot stand, known as "Tom Clayton's Roadside Cafe'." I went inside, ordered a hamburger and fries, and sat down in an empty booth next to the window. Over in the corner, two men sat looking at me as though they had trapped a lame deer.

As I sat in silence, I suddenly became very uncomfortable. It was as if I had interrupted their conversation and they expected an apology. The silence was broken, "Hey buddy, your burger's ready." The cook didn't seem to fit this part of the country. He was a squat, thick-necked man. He was dressed in a white T-shirt and blue jeans and wore a little white sailor's hat. He had tatoos covering his huge arms and spoke with a quick, northern accent. When he propped himself against the bar he looked like a happy toad eyeing an injured insect.

I was relieved when the two men started talking again in a private manner. "Hey, Jud, who won the Yankees game last night?" the cook asked.

One of the men sitting in the corner answered. "Sal, you know who won the game just as much as I do. You just want to hear me say it."

The skinny man sitting next to him spoke up, "Awe, come on Jud, tell'm even the Yanks get lucky sometimes." They all three laughed and the cook stumbled into the back room.

Then the skinny man addressed me, "Hey stranger, where you from?"

"I'm from Chicago."

"Chicago! What you doing way down here in Compton County."

"Just sight seeing, I guess."

"Well you've come a long way to sight see."

He continued to ask some general questions that I generally answered as briefly as possible. Then I realized I was the hunter and not the hunted. So I asked the first thing that came to my mind. "Who is this Goose Wakefield."

"Goose Wakefield, the famous basketball player. He led State to the Final Four in '69," the skinny man boasted.

"Oh yeah?" I had still never heard of him.

"Yep, died in a motorcycle accident his senior year. A terrible tragedy."

"Oh. That's too bad."

"Yep, he was a tall kid, musta stood about six foot and eight or nine inches. His neck was long and his head sat out about a foot in front of his body. That's why he got the name Goose, cause his head was always way out'n front of his shoulders, and he leaned forward at the waist when he walked. He was skinny as a rail but graceful. It was like he was born and raised on a basketball court. He knew every inch of the Hoover High School gym floor. Used to shoot all day and when it'd get about time to shut the doors for the night, he'd hide down in the basement so as he could shoot after they'd done closed it up. Locked in, he'd shoot without any lights on, just the streetlights coming in through the windows so as he could see only one of the baskets."

"It all paid off too," Jud quickly added.

"That's right. He might'a been an ugly duckling to some, but to them college scouts he was as graceful as a beautiful swan," laughing in spite of himself.

"He was the pride of the whole county."

I sat there in Tom Clayton's Roadside Cafe' for the next three hours discussing everything from politics to tomato plants.

As I drove on afterward I thought about how strange it was that I sat with these two men for three hours and talked of nothing that mattered. Nothing we could do or change. For the first time I had sat down and

"chewed the fat" as it is commonly called. And for the first time I felt accepted. Where I come from you never stay in one place for more than three hours unless you're asleep or dead.

I had asked Jud where I might find a place to get some sleep and he told me about Ms. Baldwin's Boarding House. He had said, "She's the best cook these parts has ever seen. Her homemade biscuits will melt in your mouth," and somehow I knew what to expect next, "She's the pride of the whole county."

When I reached Ms. Baldwin's and purchased a room, I went straight to bed. The long drive had drained alot out of me. I felt like I had changed drastically in the last twenty-four hours. It was like I had learned a lesson that no institution or degree could instill.

The next morning I experienced first hand Ms. Baldwin's boastful biscuits and wasn't at all disappointed. In the week that followed, I went fishing for the first time, drank moonshine and went to a square dance. I even went back and argued some more history with Mr. McIntyre. But the day of accountability finally came.

My editor called Ms. Baldwin's and left a message that I was to return his call, "It is important." I hadn't written down the least little thing while "sight seeing" but decided to face him voice to voice and explain.

"Mr. Abraham, how are you doing?"

"No time for small talk, son get your butt back here, I've got a real story."

"But Mr. Abraham, I'm not quite finished with-"

"There's an FBI investigation just announced concerting possible police cover ups, now get up here on the double."

After that he hung up. I didn't go.

I'm my own boss now. I own my own paper and live in Frog Holler Flats. I'm happy and content just to sit back and "chew the fat." Now I write about the letter to Tom McArver's boy from President Wils- I mean Roosevelt. And I tell the story of Goose Wakefield. And yes, I even advertise Ms. Baldwin's homemade biscuits. And if you are wondering, but haven't figured it out, the name of my paper is of course - The Pride of the County.

Innominate Dimension

Past time antemortem,
Past time antenatal,
Superceding time and law.

Electra has died,
That avenging Spirit!
Atlas soothes with healing balm.

Anomalous sight!
There is no fear,
Gone is that cancerous phobia.

Neither guilt nor greed
Nor animosity
Shall envenom this Utopia.

Flesh in rapture communing,
Souls delve into discourse,
A spirit bathes in song.

Eclipse of the defiled,
Ascent of the pure,
Eos has brought the dawn.

Michelle O'Brien

— "LAURA AT PIANO" —

Jeff Thomasson



A Curious Encounter

In a cafe on a street
I met a curious man.
With speckled spats upon his feet
And sea sprats in his hand.

He tipped his derby to the side,
He smiled a curious smile;
At first I felt that I'd deride
And laugh at his strange style.

'Till suddenly he cleared his throat
And quietly asked of me,
"This isn't something done by rote,
But would you care for tea?"

I knew not what to think or say,
I knew not what to do--
I had no answer to relay,
And not one earthly clue.

"Oh, tea at two, or tea at three,
Or tea at five to seven--
I'd like to take you home with me
For tea and crumpets, Devin."

Quite shocked by all this modesty
I started to proclaim;
To think that such a man as he
Would even know my name!

Insulted and Astounded
By this curious man in view,
I left the place--nay--bounded!
I dared not stay---would you?

Susan Hawkins

**Upon the Choosing of Thomas'
Protogen Fiber-Calcium Reduced Calorie
No Cholesterol/Thin-sliced Wheat Bread
Over Breyer's Vanilla Bean Ice Cream**

(With apologies to the ghost of Robert Frost)

Two packages lay on the freezer shelf
At the Harris Teeter store,
And I pondered the labels and pondered myself
And reflected upon my state of health
And the post-Christmas pounds and that hard gym floor;

Then took the Thomas', gross and cold,
Into my celeryed and carroted cart
Because it was fibrous, designed to uphold
My resolve to be svelte and bold,
To refine masochism into art.

And both that evening unequally lay
In packages no hand had ripped.
Oh, I kept the Breyer's for another day!
But envisioned vanilla-fudge on my way
And admired the cartons of chocolate chip.

I tell this with a sorrowful sigh,
With remorse for eating stale dry cake,
Two packages lay on the shelf, and I--
I took the one that others passed by,
And I think I made a mistake.

Joyce Compton Brown

Thought

Flows toward Mecca
 In dizzying array,
 Springing pure and sweet
Crystal clear from
 Springs hidden deep
 Within the earth,
 Spinning out
 Dancing in the sunshine
 Leaping in joy and
 Sparkling in newness,
 Weaving through
 Pebbles and sliding
 Past rocks which
 Steadfastly refuse to
 Yield in the journey to Mecca.
 Rolling on, collecting
 Speckles and bright
 Leaves of varied hue,
 Progressing, tumbling
 In streams of consciousness
 Carrying hitchhiking
Twigs and needles,
 Hesitating at bends in eddies,
 Slowing with growing load
 Of passengers gathered
 From windy tributaries,
 Advancing past hills
 Of grandiose being
 Eroding, contributing
 Further burden.
Advancing now, marching
In slow cadence,
Turbid, murky,
 Progressing sluggishly
 On toward Mecca,

Never to arrive.

Amanda Thomas

Morning in Port Charlotte

First, a rattle at the doorknob-
 Sun tells streetlamp that it's no longer needed
 The spearmint breeze squeezes gracefully through the tiny
 window screen holes
 Comes to touch my face
 Lets me smell the coming day
 And the morning tastes of sulphur, or diesel, or seaweed.
Then, a knock or two, soft and careful, on the thinly-paneled door-
 All the room is cement gray
 A dresser with no definable shape crouches like a sleeping grizzly
 While long and narrow beams of fuzzy light bounce merrily
 across the room
 As the cars outside play Follow the Leader
Three distinct raps, heavy with intent, then echo off the pillow-
 The goosebumps waltz their way up my shin-bone
 While the breeze blows stiffer
 Pulling curtain puppet strings
 And exposing the life outside...
And all the while, a sleeping fly,
 Determined to make my windowsill his home,
 Buzzes with a groan of disapproval
Finally, the knob is turned, door flung wide,
 And the hall is enveloped in five-foot-two of navy blue
 terrycloth,
 Capped in curlers, pink and foamy
 There's a clear-eyed stare, a verbal exchange,
 And a swish of once-settled air as the hall is cleared
 Then it's just me and the fur-lined shadows, who,
 Somewhere in the course of a few minutes,
 have turned against me
 They whisper and hover in their accusations
 The laughter swells around the room until the walls bulge outward
 And I cover my head with my blanket shield...
But the shadows know me
 Like my mother knows me-
They have no doubt that I will eventually roll over in a sigh of
 distress
 And find my way out of bed

Deborah Cravey

To Friends

The lofty candle has burned
to the base
since we last parted.
Yet the fire still glows,
and warms the cold air.

I've longed to light another taper.
Indeed, you all know that I have tried.
But the gale
extinguished the match.

Soon, I do hope, the winds will soften,
and then we will add wood
to the fire.

Todd Watson

Age

Sky with colors so soft
Pink, white, blue and gray
That's the unicorn's way
Horn of ivory white
Speed as quick as light
Mane of white, tail of gold
Looking for an escape
I wake to be a day old

Cynthia Newman

The Pomp of Unfortunate Circumstance

Oh Cemetery, yard of graves, you're a poison-arrowed Indian stage magician in the refuge of murky darkness
How you shave the working dog's adam's apple with your time-worn fingernail-

Crusted and yellow, infecting us with fear
As you prepare to take the stage

You've chosen the perfect golden usher,
Waxing, waning, watching while you balance plates of names
and forgotten dates upon the very tip of your sickle snout

And juggle shadows behind your back
From somewhere deep within your rancid stomach howls an organ pipe
call-to-order wind

-Perhaps a breath of indigestion,
leaving the taste of blackened flesh and
bone marrow on your slimy tongue
And still you wonder what's for supper...

With a clap of stagecraft thunder; With a dance of cloven-footed
grace,

In a spell of captivation, how you taunt us, haunt us,
tease us; follow your audience all the way home

And leave us where you found us-
In a mortal cesspool, all alone

But all you give are previews,

Frozen glimpses of your all-star grand finale
When you'll smilingly fling some paying customer into a simple,
wooden box and,

With a wave of your crooked, pointing warlock's wand,
Will make him disappear.

And all the while, your lovely worm assistants will slither up
and down the aisles, taking donations

It will be one more breath-taking, stupendous affair
With bright lights and music, (how 'bout a parade?)

And then the curtain will fall,
Leaving you, the madman wizard of midnight, to gather your props
and your rented top hat

And scatter back to your dressing room
To wait for your next performance.

Deborah Cravey

The following is a tribute for Miss Ruth Kiser written by Sheila McClure, a former Gardner-Webb student.

The Reflections staff would like to thank Miss Kiser for her support over the past years.

Tribute

In appreciation for the many qualities that make
you so special in my heart.

For being a push when I falter, a word when
I'm lonely, a guide when I'm searching, a
smile when I'm sad, a song when I'm happy.

For knowing me as I am, for accepting who
I've become.

With much love, I take joy in presenting this
expression of my thanks, for all you mean
to me.

Shelia McClure

The production of this magazine has been a labor of love on the part of a large number of people, and I wish to take this opportunity to recognize those people. Above all I want to thank the Reflections staff for giving so freely of their time and energies, and for being a large part of the production of this magazine. I also wish to thank our judges for sharing their time and expertise in the judging of the works, and a large vote of thanks must go to our advisor, Dr. Joyce Brown, for her contribution to this endeavor. It has been a pleasure to work with all of you in producing this compilation of Gardner-Webb's finest art and writing. Thank you.

Amanda Thomas

Editor

Find in middle air
An eagle on the wing,
Recognize the five
That makes the Muses sing.
-W.B. Yeats